

## The Development of Professional Responsibility in Counselor Training

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### *Abstract*

Responsibility in the field of counseling is a complex, multi-faceted concept which includes responsibility to the client, responsibility to the profession, and responsibility to the self. These responsibilities encompass the profession's global role, the call to establish consistent professional requirements, the American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics, the developmental process of student skill acquisition and professional identity development, and the curriculum and training requirements of counselor education programs. Following a general exploration of responsibility in counselor education, this article focuses on when and how counselors-in-training (CITs), as they grow in counseling skills and professional identity through coursework and mentoring and supervision, develop a sense of professional responsibility. The survey research method was employed in this study. Results indicated that students felt the construct of responsibility most when preparing for and enrolled in field experience courses. Recommendations are then given to promote the continued development of professional responsibility in CITs over the educational continuum.

*Keywords:* professional identity, professional responsibility, counselor education

## The Development of Professional Responsibility in Counselor Education

Responsibility in the field of counseling is complicated. Arslan (2018) suggests that from a global perspective, the field of counseling in western countries has the responsibility of setting an example for the field of counseling in developing countries. With this responsibility comes the onus to expand the knowledge base through research, further develop professional organizations, establish guidelines for training, review/revise ethical codes, and create and standards for training and continued education and assess counselors-in-training (CITs) according to these standards (Arslan, 2018). As professionals in a western country, viewing the counseling profession from Arslan's viewpoint is daunting. It is a reminder of privilege experienced in western countries and the responsibility that comes with this privilege. Expanding the knowledge base and participating in scholarly work and research is a privilege. Being a model in the counseling profession for other countries is an advantage and an honor. Educating future counselors is a significant responsibility. Teaching, training, and supervising require an awareness of the responsibility of our work as counselors, our work as counselor educators, and the vulnerability of both our clients and our CITs.

From a national perspective, establishing the standards for the counseling profession across states is a pressing responsibility. Olson, Brown-Rice, and Gerodias (2018) investigated professional counselor licensure requirements and the state counseling license application, including the District of Columbia. They found that, across states in the United States, the counseling profession does not have standardized educational requirements, nor does it have consistent training requirements. However, basic educational standards have been identified. For example, Olson, Brown-Rice, and Gerodias (2018) found that courses most frequently identified as educational requirements were courses such as research, program evaluation, and group counseling, which were required on 66% of state counseling licensure applications.

The quest for standardization in many professions results in the establishment of accrediting bodies (Bowers, 2017). Hence, there are two major accrediting bodies in the counseling field. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accredits master's and doctoral degree programs in counseling and its specialties that are offered by colleges and universities in the United States and throughout the world (CACREP, 2016). The Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council (MPCAC) accredits academic programs that provide science-based education and training in the practice of counseling and psychological services at the master's level, using both counseling and psychological principles and theories as they apply to specific populations and settings (MPCAC, 2015). Along with the goal of establishing consistent educational standards is the need for guidelines or standards addressing "applicants' criminal history, comportment, drug use, mental health problems, malpractice history" (Olson, Brown-Rice, & Gerodias, 2018, p. 102). As previously stated, the profession's responsibility at this level is complex, extensive, and has far-reaching effects.

### Responsibility in Counselor Education

While the broader issue of requirement consistency across states is a major concern of the counseling profession, on a regional and local level, the implementation of curriculum and training is the specific responsibility of the counselor educator. Kaplan and Martz (2014) discuss the specific ways in which the American Counseling Association's (ACA) revision of the 2014 Code of Ethics increases accountability and responsibility for counselor educators. Kaplan and Martz (2014) interviewed Shawn Spurgeon, a member of the Ethics Revision Task Force, and highlighted the areas in which the responsibilities of the counselor educator has increased. Some of these ways the responsibilities have increased are:

- 1) The expansion of the responsibility of gatekeeping. The code expands counselor educators' responsibility and now goes beyond the CIT and includes the CITs' future clients which increases the accountability for meeting professional standards.
- 2) A shift of focus from the CIT to the future clients the CIT will serve.

- 3) A counselor educator's responsibility is not just to the CITs in their program, but all individuals over whom a counselor educator has authority and power.
- 4) Counselor educators have the responsibility to network with communities and agencies to provide and evaluate field placement options.
- 5) Counselor educators have the responsibility to provide CITs with employment information and information about employment opportunities.
- 6) Counselor educators have an ethical obligation to provide career assistance to CITs. Spurgeon (in Kaplan & Martz, 2014) indicates that this obligation is clearly supported by the counselor educators' responsibility to be an advocate for their CITs.
- 7) Counselor educators have the responsibility to provide current theories and evidence-based techniques which should include outcome-based research.
- 8) Counselor educators must offer training only within their area of competency.

(Kaplan & Martz, 2014)

As stated above, the focus has shifted from the CIT to CITs' future clients. Inherent in this shift is the counselor educator's responsibility to assess CIT awareness of professional identity as well as CIT awareness of their responsibility as future clinicians.

### **Professional Responsibility and Ethics**

While the 2014 American Counseling Association's (ACA) Code of Ethics expanded the responsibilities of the counselor educator, it also provided clarity for the profession at large. The ACA developed the "following five core professional values of the counseling profession:

- 1) Enhancing human development throughout the life span;
- 2) Honoring diversity and embracing a multicultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential and uniqueness of people within their social and cultural contexts;
- 3) Promoting social justice;
- 4) Safeguarding the integrity of the counselor-client relationship; and
- 5) Practicing in a competent and ethical manner." (ACA, 2014, p. 3)

Professional responsibility to live up to these values and to the ethical code lies with the individual clinician and within the field at large. Professional responsibility to teach and assess awareness and understanding of these values and the ethical code lies with the counselor educator.

### **Responsibility and Professional Identity**

Professional identity is considered the integration of professional training, personal attributes, and the counseling values outlined in the ACA Code of Ethics (Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010; Dollarhide, Gibson, & Moss; Simons, Haas, Massella, Young, & Toth, 2017). Scholars have indicated that the development of a strong professional counseling identity begins in counselor education programs, and Granello and Young (2019) identified professional identity development as "one of the most important tasks that educators face" (p.vi). Counselor educators, mindful of their increasing responsibilities as outline above by Kaplan and Martz (2014) and aware of their responsibility to teach and exemplify core counseling values, are tasked with disseminating knowledge and modeling professional identity in a structured, coherent program of counseling study. They must focus on who the CIT is becoming, as well as what they know or can do, and requires educators to provide authentic learning experiences such as practice exposure and interaction with role models (Mylrea, Gupta, & Glass, 2017).

The link between professional identity and professional responsibility is direct and strong. To develop a sense of professional identity as a counselor entails developing a visceral awareness of one's responsibility to a vulnerable human being who often is in the worst place of their life. Ethical codes and professional values, while important, offer only the faintest impression of what it is like to assume the responsibility to help a person in distress. It is the responsibility of the counselor educator to bring the counseling encounter to life, vivifying the academic material and ethical codes so that the CIT can begin to understand what it actually means to be a professional counselor. Professional identity and

professional responsibility reinforce one another: to deeply understand one's identity as a counselor increases one mindfulness of one's responsibility to one's clients, and this felt sense of responsibility in turn increases awareness of who one is as a professional counselor.

Of particular interest to this present study is how supervision contributes to the development of professional identity in CITs. Shlomo, Levy, and Itzhaky (2012) found that satisfaction of supervision directly contributed to the positive development of professional identity, and counselor educators can take advantage of the satisfaction that CITs experience in supervisory experiences to promote growth and awareness. Indeed, given the extensive clinical training required by counselor education programs—100 hours of practicum and 600 hours of internship (CACREP, 2009; CACREP, 2016)—and the accompanying supervision by the university supervisor along with the supervision given by the field site supervisor, supervision is a major phase where the CIT develops a sense of responsibility to clients and a sense of what it means to be a counselor. Essentially, the culmination of graduate counselor educational programs is the CIT's development of their professional identity and acceptance of professional responsibility for their work with clients.

### **Developmental Approach**

As with learning, maintaining, and honing counseling skills, the transition from CIT to professional counselor is a developmental process (Hamlet & Burnes, 2012). Developmental perspectives of skill acquisition can be traced from Plato in western philosophy (Ivy & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2009) to Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill & Krathwohl, 1956). In the field of counseling, Skovholt and Ronnestad (1995) studied counselor and therapist development and created a developmental model that charted the progression of counselor skill and professional identity acquisition. Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) reformulated their model to comprise six phases: "the lay helper, the beginning student, the advanced student, the novice professional, the experienced professional, and the senior professional" (p. 5). Following the lay helper phase, which takes place before training, the beginning student phase and the advanced student phase takes place during professional education training programs, while the novice professional, the experienced professional, and the senior professional are considered postgraduate.

The beginning student phase focuses on core tasks such as theoretical and conceptual knowledge acquisition and achieving competence in meeting the content standards set by accrediting bodies such as the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The advanced student phase broadens the professional world of the CIT as they take the knowledge they have learned and begin to practice in supervised field experiences. The postgraduate phase of novice professional focuses on the developmental transition from student to professional. The experienced professional phase is a time of integration of experience, knowledge, theory and technique. The senior professional phase is a time of actualization as a professional.

The Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) model is a useful lens for viewing the developmental process of CITs. The beginning student phase addresses CITs who are in their true "student" mode. Concerns of CITs in this phase tend to be typical of students in most educational programs. CITs focus on knowledge acquisition, the academic requirements of each class, completing tasks, class attendance and, in essence, meeting the standards set by the professor. During this phase, the CIT has not yet developed the awareness of a professional's ownership of responsibility regarding their role as a professional counselor. Professors often observe CITs desperately seeking concrete answers on how to work with clients. In class, CITs present possible scenarios in counseling and ask for the prescriptive course of action the counselor should implement. Developmentally, CITs struggle with the high level of ambiguity found in counseling and become frustrated with the professor for not providing a single clear answer. The lens of the CIT is that their professors bear the responsibility in counseling interactions. Awareness of responsibility for clients has not yet developed; at best, it is in the infancy stage.

A developmental shift occurs as the CIT enters the advanced student phase. CITs are now entering the field experience phase of study. Overall, this is a professionally exciting yet anxious time for the CIT. CITs have anticipated working with “real” clients throughout their coursework and are now entering the professional realm. During this hands-on phase, a transition should occur in the CIT’s view of professional responsibility. By this time, CITs typically have completed a good deal of coursework, and in the first weeks of field experience they often begin by observing the site supervisor’s work with clients. As they do so, they simply shift professional responsibility from the professor to the site supervisor. CITs now have enough theoretical information to understand the counseling process, but they have not fully developed their professional identity and acceptance of professional responsibility. Counselor educators, in collaboration with site supervisors, make the most of this developmental phase to help counselors-in-training transition professional responsibility from professor/site supervisor to an acceptance of their own professional responsibility. Counselor educators should ensure that acceptance of responsibility is a fundamental concept evaluated in the developmental assessment of counselors-in-training.

Two important concepts that contribute to acceptance of responsibility and professional identity development are locus of control and self-determination. Facilitating awareness and acquisition of these concepts can be used to help CITs move past developmental barriers impeding their progress. Importantly, locus of control and self-determination are evidence-based concepts that provide a point of intervention for CIT struggling with acceptance of professional responsibility. Locus of control, a concept originated by Julian Rotter (1954), refers to the tendency of people to believe that control of behavior resides internally or externally. Locus of control tends to be on a continuum and can vary with the situation (e.g. home vs. work). As a CIT progresses through their educational program, assessing their locus of control and using the insight into a CIT’s individual status provides an opportunity for professional and personal development.

Acceptance of responsibility also requires self-determination. Self-determination is the decision to do something or think in a certain way. Self-Determination theory uses a developmental perspective of motivation that moves from amotivation (absence of motivation) to extrinsic motivation (driven by external forces) to intrinsic motivation (activated by internal forces). “Self-Determination theory defined the role of motivation in the formation and maintenance of identity” (Mylrea, Gupta, & Glass, 2017, p. 5). This theory indicates that high levels of motivation occur when an individual feels competent, related, has autonomy, and that “individuals who experience support and growth in each of these three areas are more likely to have high levels of motivation and to develop and maintain the particular identity in question.” (Mylrea, Gupta, & Glass, 2017, p. 5). Professional identity development incorporates the awareness and understanding of the responsibilities of the newly-acquired professional role. Hence, the role of responsibility in professional development of counselors-in-training touches on the very essence of professional identity and establishing oneself as an independent competent professional.

### **Research Question and Hypothesis**

The researchers set out to explore the following question: when do counselors-in-training become aware of their professional and ethical responsibility for clients? After the researchers reviewed the literature on professional identity development and discussed their individual experiences as both professional counselors and counselor educators, the following hypothesis was generated: CITs in masters-level counselor education programs typically begin to feel the responsibilities of being a professional counselor after they have started their practicum experience, at the latest, during the later portion of the counselor education program, and levels of perceived satisfaction would be correlated with higher levels of professional identity.

Programs in the United States of America accredited by the Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) indicated a logical and predictable course sequence in counselor education programs. CACREP only goes as far as to indicate what standards need to be met in the counseling programs to meet the required standards agreed upon by professional

counseling associations, but does not dictate when CITs are required to engage in experiential activity, only that they must have some form of practical experience (CACREP, 2009; CACREP, 2016). The programs surveyed in this study placed the clinical experience courses as one of the final courses in their curriculum.

## Method

### Research Design

In this study, we used existing data that were collected from an exit survey from a recent graduating group of CITs from CACREP-accredited counselor education programs in a public university in the eastern United States. We used a survey design “to answer questions that have been raised, to solve problems that have been posed or observed, to assess needs and set goals, to determine whether or not specific objectives have been met, to establish baselines against which future comparisons can be made, to analyze trends across time, and generally, to describe what exists, in what amount, and in what context” (Isaac & Michael, 1997, p. 136). Counselor education programs accredited by CACREP are required to complete systematic program evaluation on a regular basis to ensure that standards are being met and the program continues to provide quality instruction (CACREP, 2009; CACREP, 2016), and CITs were surveyed as part of the program evaluation process for the university being represented in this research. The data were collected anonymously and published as part of the required counselor education program evaluation process mandated by CACREP, specifically that “program faculty members engage in continuous systematic program evaluation indicating how the mission, objectives, and student learning outcomes are measured and met” (CACREP, 2009, p. 7).

### Participants

CITs who were invited to take the survey were in their final course sequence and would be graduating from their respective program within the next two months, at the latest, and were enrolled in an internship experience class. A total of 50 CITs qualified to complete the survey and, of the eligible CITs, 31 CITs completed the survey (62%). All of the CITs had successfully completed the core courses that are mandated by CACREP (2009, 2016), and the state licensure board for where the university is located. All CITs had completed classes in the following core areas: Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice, Social and Cultural Diversity, Human Growth and Development, Career Development, Helping Relationships, Group Work, Assessment, and Research and Program Evaluation.

### Measurement

The survey that was administered consisted of 16 questions that focused on professional identity development, satisfaction of their counseling program including supervision, CITs' prospects of finding gainful employment after graduation, and any comments from the CITs about program improvement. Three questions were asked that specifically focused on responsibility and professional identification: “At what point in the program did you start to feel responsible for the well-being of your clients or future clients (Semester)”; “At what point in the program did you start to feel responsible for the well-being of your clients or future clients (Year)”; and “How would you rate your strength of identity as a Professional Counselor (i.e. School Counselor, Clinical Mental Health Counselor, Marriage, Family and Couples Counselor, etc.)?” Three open-ended questions were also asked of the CITs: “What did you find most useful in your program of study?”; “What did you find least useful in your study?”; and “What recommendations do you have for the Counselor Education Programs?” The first of these open-ended survey questions was most salient to this study. CITs completed the surveys on the SurveyGizmo platform which allows for the collection of data by way of electronic devices and has the option of not collecting identifying data. The data collected for the survey did not include identifying information and were password-protected through the program. The principle researcher was the only individual who had access to the raw data.

### Results

We computed correlation coefficients among five counselor education satisfaction scales, one counseling professional identity scale, and a measurement of time when CITs started to feel responsible

for the well-being of their clients or future clients. Using the Bonferroni approach to control for Type I errors across the 21 correlations, a  $p$  value of less than .0024 ( $.05/21 = .0024$ ) was required for significance. The results of the correlational analysis show that three out of the 21 correlations were statistically significant and were greater than or equal to (.58). The three significant correlations from the study included CITs feeling prepared to work with their professional population and the strength of the CIT's identity as a professional counselor ( $r = .588, p < .001$ ); recommending the counselor education program to someone looking to become a counselor and practicum/internship experience preparing CITs to work with professional populations ( $r = .589, p < .000$ ); and recommending the counselor education program to someone looking to become a counselor and the belief that quantity of teaching in the program is high ( $r = .667, p < .000$ ).

If the Bonferroni approach to control for Type I errors across the 21 correlations was not used and the standard ( $p < .05$ ) level of statistical significance was used, the results of the correlational analysis show that three more of the original 21 correlations were statistically significant, totaling six correlations which were greater than or equal to (.41). The three significant correlations from the study included the strength of the CIT's identity as a professional counselor and practicum/internship experience preparing CITs to work with professional populations ( $r = .419, p < .019$ ); the belief that quality of teaching in the program is high and practicum/internship experience preparing CITs to work with professional populations ( $r = .453, p < .010$ ); and overall I feel prepared to work with my professional population and the courses in the counselor education program helped in my professional position, ( $r = .502, p < .004$ ).

Of the researchers' interest is the intersection of CITs' feeling responsible for the well-being of their clients and at what point this phenomenon occurs. The researchers surveyed the CITs and asked: *At what point in the program did you start to feel responsible for the well-being of your clients or future clients* (Table 1.1). 38.7% ( $n = 12$ ) of the CITs responded that they started to feel responsible for the well-being of their clients as they began field experiences required by the counselor education program. Another 29% ( $n = 9$ ) indicated that as they began the field experience, they started to feel responsible for the well-being of their clients. The total for CITs indicating the beginning of the field experience was when they started to feel responsible for the well-being of their clients was 67.7% ( $n = 21$ ).

Table 1.1

*At what point in the program did you start to feel responsible for the well-being of your clients or future clients?*

Semester	Year	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Fall	Year 1	16.1%	16.1%
Spring	Year 2	3.2%	19.4%
Fall	Year 2	29%	48.4%
Spring	Year 3	38.7%	87.1%
Fall	Year 3	6.5%	93.5%
Spring	Year 4	3.2%	96.8%

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*Note:* CITs have the option of starting their counseling program in the Fall or Spring semesters but can only start their practicum in Spring semesters and Internships in Fall semesters.

The open-ended aspect of this survey question (“What did you find most useful in your program of study?”) provided additional information, as follows: “Internship class; I found that our Internship class was extremely helpful in developing myself personally which leads me to be better professionally”; “Internship – hands-on experience and supervision”; “Listening to other classmates' experiences and seeing/hearing what they do in session with clients and getting to role-play”.

### Discussion

The researchers hypothesized that CITs would feel the sense of responsibility once they have had the practice of actively engaging with clinical populations, which was indicated by the quantitative data. The three correlations that were statistically significant and of moderate to strong strength, while controlling for Type I errors, included quality of teaching and the correlation to recommend someone to the program, positive internship experience and recommending someone to the program, and the correlation of CITs feeling prepared to work with their chosen population and strength of professional identity. Of importance to this study is information generated by the open-ended aspect of the survey question which indicates that internship is an activity that helps to develop positive professional identity and the feeling of being prepared to work with others.

The data of when CITs began to feel responsible for their clinical populations (Table 1.1) indicated that practicum (Spring Year 3) was overwhelmingly identified (38.7%). The previous semester (Fall, Year 2), which is a semester when CITs are not enrolled in any clinical experience, was particularly high (27%). The researchers believe that the CITs were starting to feel the responsibility for clinical populations because it is around this time that the CITs are interviewing at clinical placements for their practicum and internship experiences. For the CITs in this study, they had a date of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in October to have their clinical sites for practicum and internship secured. The researchers believe that this may be a point in the program where CITs are understanding that they will be working with people in a very short time. These two semesters are of importance to the researchers because the CITs of this program typically are at the end of their program and they are getting ready to start their field experience. This time accounts for more than 67% of the variance.

The researchers also hypothesized that CITs with perceived higher levels of satisfaction would be correlated with higher levels of professional identity. The data indicated that there was a moderate positive correlation between belief of a quality program and recommendation to the program along with the moderate positive correlation of CIT's internship experiences and their recommendation to the program. It can be concluded that there is a link between CITs who recommend the program and their belief that the program is of quality including their preparation to work with professional populations. Preparation for CITs to work with professional populations is moderately correlated to the CIT's identity as a professional counselor which is congruent with the literature that indicates that satisfaction with program resources and specifically with supervision has a direct link to the positive creation of professional identity (Shlomo, Levy, & Itzhaky, 2012).

Combined, the correlative and descriptive data appear to make a strong argument for our initial hypotheses. CITs appear to begin to assume responsibility as they begin to prepare in earnest for their practicum experience and, most significantly, when they entered the field in their practicum semester. Their open-ended responses endorsed the field experience itself and a crucial aspect of this experience, namely supervision. Given these results and given the developmental framework we have adopted in our study, the question remains, How can counselor educators intentionally structure their programs such that CITs arrive at the crucial time of field experience with adequate preparation to fully assume their professional responsibilities? Our results indicate that students experience a large bump in awareness of professional identity and responsibility when they begin to prepare to and then actually see clients, a



fairly obvious but important point for counselor educators to keep in mind to maintain high levels of CIT satisfaction and engagement. But it is equally obvious and important to understand that it is the responsibility of the counselor educator to hold a macro view of the development that needs to occur such that this particular phase can be fully accomplished. To that end, we offer the recommendations below.

### Recommendations

Counselor educators should intentionally structure the entire educational experience to develop professional responsibility in CITs. The following are recommended activities that should take place throughout the training process.

- 1) Prior to admission, programs could introduce the idea of professional responsibility. Information on the role and responsibilities of a professional counselor could be prominently displayed on websites and promotional and application material.
- 2) Upon acceptance, a statement on the role and responsibilities of the professional could be included. CITs could be asked to attest that they realize that they are entering a profession with ethical and legal responsibilities.
- 3) At orientation, CITs could be given information on professional responsibility and asked to perform small group activities that help them to begin to assume an internal locus of responsibility.
- 4) Throughout the curriculum, lessons on responsibility could be integrated into coursework.
- 5) In micro-counseling/skills acquisition courses, CITs could be provided with role-play opportunities. Instruction could be geared toward helping them understand and process how this work is similar to and different from actual counseling and their responsibilities toward actual clients.
- 6) When CITs arrive at the midpoint of the CIT program, CITs will apply to be masters-level candidates and as a component of candidacy, they could be asked to reflect on their growing sense of professional responsibility.
- 7) At orientation meetings that occur prior to practicum and internship, CITs could be oriented to how they might develop the final piece of the professional responsibility puzzle in their clinical experience. For example, Koltz and Champe (2010) talk about how this development may take place (shaping/practicing/emerging), which could help to sensitize CITs to the topic and focus their attention on it prior to actually taking practicum and internship.
- 8) Prior to starting a search for a practicum/internship site, CITs could create a statement of readiness for practicum/internship, reflecting on their studies and how they have prepared themselves for the clinical experience, as well as creating a plan of self-care and time management which includes submitting a calendar created by the CIT detailing how the CITs plans on managing their professional time, school time, personal time, and self-care time throughout the clinical experience.
- 9) In practicum and internship coursework, the past experiences in coursework focusing on professional identity and responsibility could be reviewed and applied in case presentations.
- 10) Exit surveys could ask CITs at the end of their program of study to reflect on their development of professional responsibility, the strategy undertaken by this present study.
- 11) And finally, alumni can be contacted. Alumni can respond to surveys asking about their experience as new professionals and these results disseminated to current CITs. Additionally, invitations could be issued to alumni who could offer their perspective on the topic of professional responsibility to practicum and internship classes.

### Limitations

While the review of the quantitative data used an approach to control for Type I errors in a smaller population, one of the largest limitations of the study was the survey sample. Ideally, the researchers would like to have had a much larger sample size that spanned across the entire educational

program, was sampled from several universities, and included students in counseling-related disciplines. Had these parameters been met, the researchers would have been able to make more global statements about the data collected, had it been congruent with the findings of this research.

### **Conclusion**

Our results indicate that there is a correlation between a CIT's sense of professional responsibility and when the CIT is actively engaged in practical experiential activities. While the topic of how to teach responsibility in professional counseling is left up to individual programs, counselor educators have the responsibility to help CITs develop a sense of responsibility that will bring forth effective and ethical practices within the profession. The developmental approach that we reference provides a lens to understand how CITs begin to assume responsibility for their clients, and the recommendations we provide can help counselor education programs to intentionally facilitate this crucial process. Counselor educators must remain mindful that while they can and must assume responsibility for CITs and the clients that the CITs serve, this is only part of the process. Ultimately, the CIT must locate responsibility within themselves and determine to act on it, in order to become a fully functioning and ethically responsible counselor.

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